

[redacted]
Central Intelligence Agency



Washington, D. C. 20505

31 October 1986

MEMORANDUM

SUBJECT: Soviet Statements on SDI Since Reykjavik

Numerous public [redacted] comments by Soviet officials since the 11-12 October Reykjavik summit have alleged that Moscow's position with regard to research and testing of space-based antiballistic missile systems was not properly understood by the US side in Reykjavik. These comments seem to imply some flexibility on Moscow's part on the question of permissible testing within the limits of the ABM Treaty and may foreshadow Soviet probing on this issue. [redacted]

Since Reykjavik, Soviet spokesmen have sought to counter allegations in the West that Moscow's insistence on banning deployment of space-based antiballistic missile defenses led to the negotiating impasse and prevented agreement on strategic arms reductions. Both Gorbachev and chief Soviet arms negotiator Karpov have claimed publicly that the Soviets did not ask the United States in Reykjavik to renounce the program. They have argued that the Soviet proposal was aimed at ensuring that SDI remained a "research" effort within the framework of limitations contained in the ABM Treaty for a period of ten years.

-- In public statements on 12 and 14 October reporting the Reykjavik meeting, Gorbachev acknowledged the President's commitment to SDI and claimed that he had not requested cessation of the program. He said that he had proposed that all provisions of the ABM Treaty be fully observed and that his proposal to continue laboratory tests would allow the President "to see through his idea and to clarify what SDI actually is."

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-- In a 14 October press conference in London, Karpov said that Gorbachev's SDI proposal had been misunderstood and that the Soviets were not insisting on renunciation of the SDI program.

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-- In a 17 October press conference in Moscow, Karpov added that the Soviets had asked that the SDI program not transcend the framework of the ABM Treaty. [REDACTED]

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Soviet spokesmen have emphasized an interpretation of Article V of the ABM Treaty that prohibits the development, testing, and deployment of space-based ABM systems regardless of the technology involved (see attachment for exact treaty provisions). An 18 October Pravda article by K. Georgiyev (an apparent pseudonym suggesting authoritative authorship) discussed the differences between the United States and the Soviet Union on what activities are permitted by the ABM Treaty for space-based ABM systems. The article disputed what it claims is the US interpretation of the treaty--that Agreed Statement D allows development and testing of space-based ABM systems based on exotic technologies up to the start of deployment--and claimed that Article V prohibits all space-based ABMs. It cited a January 1983 Arms Control and Disarmament Agency report to Congress to support the contention that the United States agreed with the Soviet position on Article V. It claimed the United States changed its position only after the March 1983 decision to proceed with the Strategic Defense Initiative. This emphasis on the putative restrictions of the ABM Treaty appears in part to be an effort by Moscow to bring pressure on the US Administration from both Allied and domestic constituencies to renounce the "broad" US interpretation of the ABM Treaty, which they understand would allow testing in space of ABM weapons or components. [REDACTED]

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While vigorously denouncing the "broad" interpretation of the treaty, several Soviet statements before and since Reykjavik have seemed to point toward a Soviet willingness to accept SDI-related research within the context of the restrictive US interpretation of the treaty, which would prohibit testing in space of prototypes of ABM weapons or components. They have implied that the issue of testing limitations related to space-based defenses can be the subject of further US-Soviet discussions.

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-- In public [] remarks following the Reykjavik meeting, Karpov claimed that the Soviets were suggesting that if there were disagreements on the interpretation of the ABM Treaty, they could be dealt with and agreed upon. He said that Moscow would not agree to the broad US interpretation of the ABM Treaty but would be prepared to accept the restrictive US interpretation if Washington would abide by it.

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-- An American journalist on 16 October quoted an unnamed Soviet bloc source as saying that a potential compromise on SDI might include agreement on the "number and kinds" of tests that could be conducted outside of laboratories for a period of up to 12 years with provisions for negotiations on deployments at the conclusion of the period.

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[] According to press accounts, Roal'd Sagdeyev, Director of the Soviet Space Research Institute, also said in a 29 October press conference at the United Nations that some tests could be carried out in space because scientists consider manned space stations to be orbital laboratories.

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-- Georgiy Arbatov, Director of the United States of America and Canada Institute, said in a 29 October interview on Hungarian television that the question of what is meant by laboratory testing could be further clarified and agreement reached. []

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[REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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-- Roal'd Sagdeyev has also been cited in the press as suggesting that the power of a laser could determine if it was within the limits considered permissible. [REDACTED]

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[REDACTED]

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1972 ABM TREATY

Article V

Each Party undertakes not to develop, test, or deploy ABM systems or components which are sea-based, air-based, space-based or mobile land-based.

Agreed Statement D

In order to insure fulfillment of the obligation not to deploy ABM systems and their components except as provided in Article III of the Treaty, the parties agree that in the event ABM systems based on other physical principles and including components are created in the future, specific limitations on such systems and their components would be subject to discussion in accordance with Article XIII and agreement in accordance with Article XIV of the Treaty (Article III limits the number of ABMs that may be deployed, Article XIII establishes the Standing Consultative Commission, and Article XIV provides for ratification procedures).

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